

Risk Assessment of the National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories

NIH Blue Ribbon Panel



May 2, 2008

**Building 31, Conference Room 10
NIH Campus**

Today's Topics

- **Review of NIH Blue Ribbon Panel's charge**
- **NRC Committee on Technical Input on the Draft Supplementary Risk Assessment and Site Suitability Analyses (DSRASSA)**
 - **Review of Statement of Work**
 - **Presentation of NRC Committee letter report Regarding strategies for addressing the issues raised by the NRC regarding the DSRASSA**
- **Discussion**
- **Public Comments**
- **Next Steps**

NIH Blue Ribbon Panel: Purpose

- **To provide scientific and technical advice to the NIH regarding the construction and operation of a national biocontainment laboratory at Boston University Medical Center.**
 - **Comments and concerns have been voiced by:**
 - **Courts**
 - **Local community**
 - **General public**

NIH Blue Ribbon Panel: Major Task

- **The Blue Ribbon Panel will provide independent scientific advice regarding:**
 - **The scope of any additional risk assessments that might be necessary;**
 - **Effective risk communication.**
- **The Panel will be especially mindful of issues related to National Environmental Policy Act requirements, environmental justice, community liaison, and risk communication.**

Specific Tasks

- **Review federal and state judicial materials and public concerns;**
- **Consult with technical experts;**
- **Evaluate the adequacy of the scenarios, organisms, methodologies, and assumptions in the supplementary risk assessments.**
- **Propose additional risk assessments as appropriate;**
- **Provide ongoing advice regarding the conduct of such studies;**
- **Advise on final report.**

Membership and Structure

- The Blue Ribbon Panel is established as a Working Group of the standing Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD), NIH.
 - <http://www.nih.gov/about/director/acd/index.htm>
 - The Panel's recommendations will be conveyed to the NIH Director through the ACD.
- The Panel members provide expertise in:
 - Infectious diseases
 - Public health
 - Epidemiology
 - Risk assessment
 - Infectious disease modeling
 - Risk communications
 - Biosafety
 - Bioethics
 - Environmental justice.

Materials Provided to NIH Blue Ribbon Panel

- **Final Environmental Impact Statement (December 2005)**
- **Final Environmental Impact Report (July 2004)**
- **Draft Supplementary Risk Assessment and Site Suitability Analyses (DSRASSA; July 2007)**
- **Public Comments submitted**
- **Transcript of Faneuil Hall Meeting (October 2007)**
- **NRC Committee Letter report regarding the DSRASSA (November 2007)**

Materials Provided to NIH Blue Ribbon Panel

- **Judicial materials**
- **Demographic and health information regarding population in and around Boston**
- **Articles and texts on risk assessment and risk communication**
- **Articles on modeling and other analytic methods**
- **Background information on risk mitigation and emergency response plans**
- **Media clippings**

**NRC Committee on Technical Input on the NIH's
Draft Supplementary Risk Assessments and
Site Suitability Analyses (DSRASSA) for the
Boston University National Emerging Infectious
Diseases Laboratories:**

**Review of NRC Committee
Statement of Task**

NRC Committee Convened in 2007

- **The original NRC Committee on Technical Input on the NIH's Draft Supplementary Risk Assessments and Site Suitability Analyses (DSRASSA) for the Boston University National Emerging Infectious Diseases Laboratories (NEIDL) was appointed “...to provide technical input on the DSRASSA as requested by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.”**
- **“The Committee's letter report released in November 2007 was critical of the NIH's draft document, with specific concerns raised about agent selection, scenario development, modeling methodology, consideration of environmental justice issues, and risk communication.”***

(Citation: The NRC Committee Statement of Task, April 2008)*

NRC Committee Reconvened in 2008

- The NIH has now appointed a Blue Ribbon Panel to advise NIH on responding to judicial requests and public concerns about the operation and siting of the BU NEIDL and to recommend any additional risk assessment studies that may be needed.
- “Given prior NRC comments on the DSRASSA, the NIH is asking the NRC Committee for input on any further supplementary risk assessments that NIH might undertake.”
- In response to the NIH Request, the original NRC committee has been reconvened “...to prepare a brief letter report summarizing its views on the scope (e.g., worst case scenarios, alternative sites, BSL-3 and BSL-4 facilities, selection of agents, etc.) and methodological approaches to be taken to improve any additional risk assessment studies NIH prepares and will discuss these views with the Blue Ribbon Panel in a meeting or conference call. ” *

(* Citation: *The NRC Committee Statement of Task, April 2008*)

Statement of Task for NRC

- **The reconvened NRC Committee will meet with the Blue Ribbon Panel:**
 - **“...to discuss in more detail the Committee's concerns about the DSRASSA and**
 - **to provide in writing its views on approaches to be taken and issues to be addressed to improve any subsequent risk analyses that may be undertaken.” ***
- **“Specifically, the NRC Committee will provide input on analytical approaches, risk assessment methodologies, and particular scenarios that the NIH could include in its work plan to address judicial requests and public concerns about risks associated with the siting and operation of the NEIDL.” ***

(Citation: The NRC Committee Statement of Task, April 2008)*

**NRC Committee Letter Report
Regarding
Strategies for Addressing the Issues
Raised Regarding the
Draft Supplementary Risk Assessment
and Site Suitability Analyses**

**John Ahearne, Ph.D.
NRC Committee Chair and
Executive Director
Sigma Xi Center
The Scientific Research Society**

Discussion



Public Comment



Next Steps

- **NIH Blue Ribbon Panel development of study plans**
 - **Blue Ribbon Panel meeting in Boston, Massachusetts (May 16, 2008)**
 - **Presentation to the Advisory Committee to the Director, NIH (June 2008)**